The Government announced in June 2004 its intention to double the flow of credit to agriculture in three years. The actual credit flow in 2004-05 to agriculture increased by 32% over the credit flow in 2003-04, as against a target of 30%. In the current financial year, the flow of credit to agriculture till September, 2005 has been Rs. 83,502 crore.

Permission to open Foreign Branches by PNB

†2195. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Punjab National Bank has sought the permission of Government to open more branches in foreign countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the names of the countries where these branches are proposed to be set-up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) Reserve Bank of India has recommended the applications received from Punjab National Bank for opening a Branch in Hong Kong, an Offshore Banking Unit in Singapore, a fully owned subsidary in Vancouver, Canada and a subsidary in London (UK).

Families benefited under Health Insurance Scheme

†2196. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) total number of families benefited so far, under Health Insurance Scheme;

(b) whether the present scheme is proving to be more popular as compared to the Universal Health insurance Scheme announced by previous Government; and

(c) if so, in what manner?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The total number of families benefited under the Universal Health Insurance Scheme so far is as under:—

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.